

MEDIA RELEASE

2 October 2007

Clinical best practice not always applied

Studies of healthcare provision show that many patients do not get care that is consistent with the best available evidence, a claim made in a recent editorial published in the October issue of *Australian Prescriber* titled 'Turning knowledge into action'.

The author, Dr Heather Buchan from the National Institute of Clinical Studies in Melbourne, part of the National Health and Medical Research Council, claims that a study of several thousand people in the US showed that people received care consistent with best practice recommendations only 55% of the time.

In Australia, limited studies show that there is widespread underuse of many drugs, such as oral anticoagulants in people with atrial fibrillation, and ACE inhibitors and beta blockers in patients with heart failure. Conversely there is also overuse of drugs in Australia, such as antibiotics for the common cold and acute bronchitis.

"It can take more than 15 years for research findings on a number of clinical interventions (such as influenza vaccination) to reach a rate of use of 50% in eligible patients in clinical practice," writes Dr Buchan.

There are many barriers that prevent best evidence being applied in practice. These include lack of knowledge; lack of recognition that a gap exists; beliefs or attitudes that research findings are not important or relevant to practice; and established systems of care that make it difficult to change customary processes.

"In some instances, patient beliefs and preferences play an important role in influencing prescribing behaviour, such as the inappropriate prescribing of antibiotics for the common cold," says Dr Buchan.

The author recommends that improving clinical practice involves overcoming these barriers, using a systematic approach with good leadership and support, as well as providing ongoing practice data to practitioners.

For the full text of the editorial see www.australianprescriber.com. Other articles in the October issue of *Australian Prescriber* include **Managing injuries by venomous sea creatures in Australia**, by Geoffrey Isbister; **Antidepressants in pregnancy and breastfeeding** by Anne Sved Williams; **Consumer Medicine Information conundrums** by Parisa Aslani; **Prescribing exercise for diabetes** by Bronwyn Penny.

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For further information contact Maida Talhami on 02 8217 8700 (bh), 0419 618 365 or mtalhami@nps.org.au.

About Australian Prescriber

Australian Prescriber is an independent peer-reviewed journal providing critical commentary on therapeutic topics for health professionals, particularly doctors in general practice. It is published by the National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS), an independent, non-profit organisation for Quality Use of Medicines funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. *Australian Prescriber* is distributed every two months in hard copy to health professionals, free of charge, and online in full text at www.australianprescriber.com.

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